

2004 GALVESTON BAY INVASIVE SPECIES RISK ASSESSMENT
INVASIVE SPECIES SUMMARY

Created by: Environmental Institute of Houston, University of Houston-Clear Lake
and the Houston Advanced Research Center

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| Common Name: Monk parakeet, Quaker, or Gray-headed Parakeet |
| Latin Name: <i>Myiopsitta monachus</i> |
| Category: Terrestrial Animal |
| Place of Origin: <p>“The Monk Parakeet is a South American species, originally ranging from central Bolivia and south Brazil to central Argentina.” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Place of Introduction: <p>“It is thought that the first escaped birds may have come from an incident in 1967 at Kennedy Airport in New York City, where crates carrying the birds broke and several escaped (Long, 1981). Large numbers of Monk Parakeets were imported to the U.S. during the 1960’s. It is estimated that over 35,000 were imported between 1967 and 1970 (Ehrlich, 1988). First established in New York and New Jersey, Monk Parakeets have established breeding colonies in such areas as Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, California, and Hawaii. 1988 estimates put the U.S. population at about 4,000 to 5,000 birds (Ehrlich, 1988).” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Date of Introduction: 1967 |
| States (or areas) Effected: <p>Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, California, and Hawaii ... “Monk Parakeets have been sighted or are established in several Texas cities including Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and Waxahachie (Rappole and Blacklock, 1994). They are now included on the Official Texas State List. In the Austin area they have been established since the 1970’s. A large number of the Austin population may have come from a release of 19 birds in 1991 by Austinite Janet Giles in the Bouldin Creek neighborhood (Gandara, 1995). These releases of “unwanted pets” and escapes by wild breeders (birds that were captured in the wild for breeding purposes) are the main source of feral populations.” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> <p>“In Houston: North of West Belfort at the Railroad Tracks about 1/2 mile east of the intersection of Post Oak. Look for the nest one or two poles north of West Belfort. I used to live in this neighborhood and often saw them while walking on the Braes Bayou Greenway that runs along Braeswood between Loop 610 and Stella Link. In the City of Bellaire there was a nest in the Tower at the intersection of Willow Bend and Renwick. In Kemah there is a nest that has been active for 20 years. It is visible on the west side of SH146 from the bridge in the powerlines.” http://www.texasbirding.net/birds/monk.htm (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Growth/Size: <p>“It is an abundant bird, found flying in flocks of 10 to 15 and up to a 100.” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Feeding Habits/Diet: <p>“The Monk's diet consists mostly of seeds, grains, fruits, berries, and insects. Although they are normally sedentary, they will travel long distances to food sources such as orchards, cropfields, and suburban feeders. Neidermyer and Hickey (1977) credit backyard feeders as being an important factor in the Monk Parakeet’s ability to survive cold winter months.”... “It is a hardy bird and adapts well to the cold. Minimum temperature records in central Argentina, where they normally range, have been as low as 20° Fahrenheit (Bull, 1973).” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Habitat: <p>“Its preferred habitat is riparian woodlands, but can also be found in open forests, palm groves, city parks, and suburban yards. It is commonly found in close proximity to large bodies of water and human habitation. It is an abundant bird, found flying in flocks of 10 to 15 and up to a 100.” http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html (Accessed 11 March 2003).</p> |
| Attitude (aggressive, etc.): <p>“In South America, the Monk Parakeet is known as a major agricultural pest. Large flocks of parakeets descend on ripening cereal and citrus fruits and eat the seeds and grains. Estimated annual crop losses are reported to be from 2 to 15 percent, and may be up to 45 percent (Bull, 1977). However, these estimates may be inflated by farmers in order to receive more financial aid.”... “The bird’s aggressive nature have caused it to compete with native species for food and nesting sites. There have been reports of them killing Blue-Jays and a Robin (Ehrlich, 1988). Freeland (1973) observed Monks involved in a territorial dispute with a House Sparrow in Pittsburgh, noting that the sparrow was later found bitten to death below the nest.”... “Many experts feel that there is no cause for</p> |

alarm, though. The most extensive damage done by Monk Parakeets in the U.S. has occurred in Florida, where they have damaged powerlines and transformers (Bucher, 1992). <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html> (Accessed 11 March 2003).

Physical Description:

The Monk Parakeet "is a medium sized Psittaciform about 29 cm (11½ in) in length, with a long pointed tail. It is the sole representative of its genus. It is distinguished by its bright-green color and gray throat, forehead, cheeks and breast. The outer primaries and secondaries are blue and its bill is a rosy flesh color. The name Monk reflects its coloring. The gray feathers resemble a monk's hood. Both sexes are identical in appearance. Its call is a noisy, screeching "eeeh-eeeh.""
<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html> (Accessed 11 March 2003).

Management Recommendations / Control Strategies: include references for existing site-specific strategies

"Several forms of eradication and control have been tried in South America to stop the destruction of crops, but they have only been partly successful. Netting, shooting, trapping and fire have been used with limited success. Bounties have been issued for breeding pairs, and in one Argentine province bounties were paid for 427,206 pairs of feet between 1958 and 1960 (Neidermyer and Hickey, 1977). Argentina has also allowed unlimited trapping and exportation of parakeets due to there pest status (Bucher, 1992). Some more unusual methods of control have been to use recorded distress and alarm calls to frighten birds away from fields and to send children on horseback to patrol the fields and scare the parakeets away (Bucher, 1992). The status of the Monk Parakeet as a pest has caused considerable concern in areas were it has been introduced and established. Its potential to be a pest in its new range is still not fully realized." <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html> (Accessed 11 March 2003).

References (includes journals, agency/university reports, and internet links):

1. FWC - <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/grg/ustudent/gcraft/fall96/huebner/projects/monk1.html>
2. TX- <http://www.texasbirding.net/birds/monk.htm>